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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/654,951	09/05/2000	Robert A. Cordery	F-100	7627
919	7590	03/30/2004	EXAMINER	
PITNEY BOWES INC. 35 WATerview DRIVE P.O. BOX 3000 MSC 26-22 SHELTON, CT 06484-8000			CHEUNG, MARY DA ZHI WANG	
		ART UNIT		PAPER NUMBER
		3621		
DATE MAILED: 03/30/2004				

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)
	09/654,951	CORDERY ET AL.
Examiner	Art Unit	
Mary Cheung	3621	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).

Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

1) Responsive to communication(s) filed on 14 January 2004.

2a) This action is **FINAL**. 2b) This action is non-final.

3) Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

4) Claim(s) 1-28 is/are pending in the application.
4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
5) Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
6) Claim(s) 1-28 is/are rejected.
7) Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
8) Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

9) The specification is objected to by the Examiner.

10) The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) accepted or b) objected to by the Examiner.

 Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).

 Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).

11) The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

12) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
a) All b) Some * c) None of:
1. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

1) Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
2) Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
3) Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____.
4) Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____.
5) Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
6) Other: _____.

DETAILED ACTION

Response to Arguments

1. In view of the appeal brief filed on January 14, 2004, PROSECUTION IS HEREBY REOPENED. New grounds of rejection are set forth below.

To avoid abandonment of the application, appellant must exercise one of the following two options:

(1) file a reply under 37 CFR 1.111 (if this Office action is non-final) or a reply under 37 CFR 1.113 (if this Office action is final); or,

(2) request reinstatement of the appeal.

If reinstatement of the appeal is requested, such request must be accompanied by a supplemental appeal brief, but no new amendments, affidavits (37 CFR 1.130, 1.131 or 1.132) or other evidence are permitted. See 37 CFR 1.193(b)(2).

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

2. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

3. This application currently names joint inventors. In considering patentability of the claims under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), the examiner presumes that the subject matter of the various claims was commonly owned at the time any inventions covered therein were made absent any evidence to the contrary. Applicant is advised of the obligation under 37 CFR 1.56 to point out the inventor and invention dates of each claim that was not

commonly owned at the time a later invention was made in order for the examiner to consider the applicability of 35 U.S.C. 103(c) and potential 35 U.S.C. 102(e), (f) or (g) prior art under 35 U.S.C. 103(a).

4. Claims 1-6, 8-20 and 22-28 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Abumehdi et al., U. S. Patent 5,367,464 in view of Sharow, U. S. Patent 6,061,668.

As claims 1 and 15, Abumehdi teaches a method and a system for auditing a database comprising a plurality of records, said records each being accessible through at least one of a plurality of independent modules, said method comprising the steps of (abstract and Figs. 1; specifically, *"a plurality of independent modules" corresponds to the plurality of franking machines 10₁-10_n as shown in Figure 1*):

- a) Maintaining a set of additive audit data in each said modules (column 4 line 64 – column 5 line 54 and Fig. 1);
- b) Controlling said modules so that each module increments a set of audit data maintained in said module when a record is accessed through said module (Figs. 1-3B);
- c) Summing audit data in each module to generate system audit data (column 5 lines 19-54 and Fig. 1);
- d) Verifying said database's integrity against said system audit data (column 5 lines 26-32 and Figs. 3A-3B).

Abumehdi does not specifically teach that the system audit data is generated by summing the audit data of each of said modules. However, Sharow teaches summing

sets of audit data of each of the plurality of modules to generate system audit data, and verifying the database's integrity against the system audit data (column 3 lines 24-30 and column 5 lines 46-54 and column 7 lines 20-24 and Figs. 1, 5). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to add the features of summing the audit data of each of said modules to generate the system audit data, and verifying the database's integrity against the system audit data in Abumehdi's teaching because this would increase the overall consistency of all the modules.

As to claims 2, 9, 16 and 24, Abumehdi teaches sending a user request for access to a record and said request record to a selected a selected one of said modules; and said selected module updating said requested record in accordance with said request (column 5 line 19-54 and Fig. 1).

As to claims 3, 17 and 23, Abumehdi teaches said selected module incorporates encrypted information in said record to prevent generation of fraudulent records (Figs. 2A-3B).

As to claims 4, 10 and 20, Abumehdi teaches a request for a digital postal indicium and comprises controlling said selected module to generate and return to said requesting user a digital postal indicium in accordance with said request; and controlling said selected module to update said request record in accordance with said request (column 1 lines 17-21 and column 2 lines 37-47 and column 5 lines 19-54 and Figs. 2A-2C).

As to claims 5 and 18, Abumehdi teaches said selected module incorporates encrypted information in said audit data to authenticate said audit data (Figs. 2A-2C).

As to claims 6 and 19, Abumehdi teaches auditing a database as discussed above. Abumehdi does not specifically teach the selected module incorporates time information in said audit data. However, Sharrow teaches a selected module incorporates time information in the audit data (column 5 lines 58-65). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to allow the selected module in Abumehdi's teaching to include time information in the audit data so that the system can better monitor each transaction.

As to claims 8 and 22, increments of a linear error correction code for correcting a field of said records, whereby said audit data can be summed to generate a system error correcting code to correct said field of said records are taught by Abumehdi as the audit data goes through error detection check, and if errors are detected, the audit data will be corrected (column 5 lines 27-32).

As to claims 11-12 and 25-26, Abumehdi teaches the corrected field contains a total postage amount or a total number of indicia dispensed for the corresponding record (column 5 lines 15-54).

As to claims 13 and 27, said sets of audit data comprises arithmetic totals for values stored in said field of said records, whereby arithmetic sums of said values across said modules can be compared with arithmetic sums across said records, whereby numbers of errors greater than the number which can be detected by said system error correcting code can be detected are taught by Abumehdi as the audit data

comprises arithmetic totals for values stored in said field of said records, whereby arithmetic sums of said values across said modules can be compared with arithmetic sums across said records, the audit data goes through error detection check, and if errors are detected, the audit data will be corrected (column 5 lines 27-54).

As to claims 14 and 28, Abumehdi teaches the field contains a total postage amount or a total number of indicia dispensed (column 5 lines 15-54).

5. Claims 7 and 21 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Abumehdi et al., U. S. Patent 5,367,464 in view of Sharrow, U. S. Patent 6,061,668 in further view of Kara et al., U. S. Patent 5,778,076.

As to claims 7 and 21, Abumehdi modified by Sharrow teaches auditing a database as discussed above. Abumehdi modified by Sharrow does not specifically teach providing security against tampering. However, Kara teaches providing security against tampering (column 15 lines 16-20). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to allow the method of Abumehdi modified by Sharrow to include the feature of against tampering because user would feel confident to make transactions via the system.

Inquire

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Mary Cheung whose telephone number is (703)-305-0084. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday – Thursday from 8:00 AM to 5:30 PM. The examiner can also be reached on alternate Fridays.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, James Trammell, can be reached on (703) 305-9768.

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the receptionist whose telephone number is 703-308-1113.

The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceedings is assigned are as follows:

(703) 872-9306 (Official Communications; including After Final Communications labeled "BOX AF")

(703) 746-5619 (Draft Communications)

Hand delivered responses should be brought to Crystal Park 5, 2451 Crystal Drive, 7th Floor Receptionist.

Mary Cheung *Mary Cheung*
Patent Examiner
Art Unit 3621
March 23, 2004